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PREFERMENT,
OR
AMBITION'S LADDER,
A SATIRE.

BY L. A. WILMER,
Author of "The Quacks of Helicon."

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PREFERMENT:

OR

AMBITION'S LADDER.

AN INSTRUCTIVE POEM

FOR

POLITICAL PUPILS.

WITH SHINING EXAMPLES FROM REAL LIFE.

BY L. A. WILMER;

Author of "The Quacks of Helicon."

PHILADELPHIA.

J. W. MACCLEFIELD & CO.
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REMARKS

EXPLANATORY, APOLOGETIC AND CAUTIONARY.

The design of this poem is to offer some discouragement to office-seeking and demagogueism, two of the greatest mischiefs that afflict this country.

The reader will see at a glance that no *party* purpose is intended to be answered. The author has no reliance on the efficacy of any political creed to produce a change of heart. It requires no discernment to perceive—and but little candor to confess—that there are honest and sensible men, as well as rogues and blockheads, in all parties. Factions are not like wines in this: they grow *worse* with age. The putrifactive fermentation constantly goes on, until corruption becomes complete. We make no attempt, therefore, to represent any *old* party as pure in principles and faultless in practice.

Since this Satire was written and finished, at least one person named in it has departed this life. The author never intended to assail the deceased; it was not convenient, however, to leave out one name and substitute another, nor was that deemed necessary, as it is believed that no injustice has been done by us either to the living or the dead.

One word to the *ladies*,—they are warned in time not to examine these pages, which were really not intended for their perusal. Our little book, though it contains nothing positively wicked, no dainty and decently expressed libertinism or blasphemy, may be justly charged with some occasional indelicacy of phraseology;—but as the subject is not an attractive one to females, and as no such seasoning as the rakish piquancies of Bulwer or Eugene Sue can be promised, it is thought that the caution just given will have the desired effect.



PREFERMENT.

ASPIRING souls, who anxiously devise,
(And not too squeamishly,) the means to rise,—
Give ear:—A new academy I found
Where hearts and heads as hollow and unsound
As Clay's own bosom or M'Connel's pate, 5
May learn the grand arcanum—to be great.
I teach what deeds and sufferance are required,
What pains unpitied and what toils untired,
Before the statesman's paradise is won,
The prize attain'd and all his labors done.— 10
When, like Alcides, all with muck besmear'd,
Steep'd in unsavory unction to the beard,
From filthier jobs than stable-work by odds,
He comes to sit unquestion'd with the gods.

Fast by the flues the master sweeps attend 15
And teach their dusky urchins to ascend,
Point the dim passage to the clamb'ring elves,
But seldom mount, or wish to mount, themselves:
Thus, my disciples, I direct your way
Through paths of gloom, impervious to the day; 21
A tortuous route, where every sooty trace
And dusty sprinkling that obscures your face,
Is but a shadowy harbinger, that brings
A sun-gilt future, bright with heavenly things:
Thus ashes, which your saintly noddles wear, 25
Foretell the crown of glory to be there.
And wonder not if I contented show
Your upward journey, yet remain below;—
Alas! afflicted with a stubborn spine,
I feel an humbler destiny is mine: 30
For, like those meek evangelists who teach
A pathway to that heaven they may not reach,
Whose souls abhor th' intemperate zeal that earns
Supernal splendors by terrestrial spurns;—
My grovelling wishes to the dust are bound, 35
With no ambition to be kick'd or crown'd.

Am I the first to teach or you to learn,
 How men may honors and distinction earn?
 What schemes and tricks for eminence are tried,
 How abject meanness ministers to pride; 40
 How souls debas'd in morals and in mind,
 To wrongs, contempt and infamy resign'd,
 Mount, like the fetid gas from marshy spots,
 And shine from an original that rots.
 It irks and frets my spirit, I protest, 45
 That all my skill preceptively express'd,
 Others, more daring, have in *practice* shown
 And won a laurel worthier than my own.
 Can I, in cramp'd Iambic rhymes, repeat
 Such pure and perfect lessons of deceit 50
 As in thy deeds are read, without a book,
 Oh exemplary sage of Kinderhook!
 Ah me, how weak, contemptible, in fact, [act!
 Are they who write and talk, compar'd with them who

First, if the statesman's wreath you hope to wear,
 By constant practice for the course prepare; 56
 As racers always train before they run,
 So be your task in privacy begun;
 And, as coquettes before their mirrors plan
 The captivation of imperial man, 60
 Arrange each feature, every motion try,
 And teach each gesture, every look to lie:
 Thus, in elaborate study, gain that art [heart.
 Which wins, with hollow smiles, each unsuspecting

A mock sincerity, by craft supplied, 65
 Is the best veil your purposes to hide.
 Oh how absurd is cunning *unconceal'd!*
 It guards the bosom like a paste-board shield;
 A vile burlesque, an impotent pretence,
 Provoking war and offering no defence. 70
 But, better skill'd in these great mysteries, thou
 With seeming candor ornament thy brow;
 And as the cobra wears a beauteous skin,
 Be fair without, if venemons within.
 As rotten poplar, (such the tricks of trade,) 75
 Is oft with fine mahogany o'erlaid,
 And few beneath the shining surface look:
 Thus seeming is for substance still mistook;

Learn you the knavish cabinet-maker's art,
Veneer your face with smiles and hide a rotten heart.

As pigs, unfitted for the joys of love, 81
Increase in fatness and in flesh improve;
Thus, would you thrive, bid every impulse fly,
And nature's claims ungraciously deny;
All artificial, like Iago, be; 85
A thing of passionless rascality.
I pray you earnestly your mouth to guard,
That all your speech be uttered by the card;
For words are traitors; hold them still in doubt,
Or dread their agency if they slip out. 90
But of all skill in politics profess'd,
Equivocation is the first and best;
Language that two constructions will admit,
May, if required, a double purpose fit;
And thus a sure and safe retreat is found, 95
Should it expedient be to shift your ground.
This Noah, (cunning Hebrew !) can confirm,
Who never used an unambiguous term.
But few like him with natural gifts are bless'd,
And you, of humbler faculties possess'd, 100
Must try the Samian plan, make *silence* do;
'Tis always safe and oft expedient too:
When Clay is ask'd his principles to tell,
Not all his eloquence could speak so well.
Be uncommitted; 'tis the statesman's pride 105
To keep himself by promises untied;
For every pledge that from your lips may steal,
Shall prove at last a fetter on your heel.
In this the sum of statemanship is found,
To talk around a subject and around; 110
As one would eat an apple, skipping o'er
Its most essential principle, the core.
Coquette with all; each suitor keep at bay
"With sweet, reluctant, amorous delay."
Teach him, in practice, 'tis the sum and scope 115
Of all terrestrial happiness—*to hope.*

As various paths lead upward, 'tis your plan
To keep as many open as you can;
A choice of routes be careful to provide,
That one being found too rough, another may be tried.

And by experienced stagers 'tis confess'd
That dirtiest routes are commonly the best.
As when your foot you casually besmear,
You bless your stars and know good luck is near :
Thus oft, in life, mis-steps that make you smell,
Immense success and happiness foretell. 126

And know'st thou not that tender flowrets nurs'd
Where Cloacina's favors are dispers'd,
With rapid growth and rich florescence shoot,
The fairest blossoms from the foulest root? 130
Instructed thus, my pupils, dread no hurt
From frequent contact with enlivening dirt;
So shall your fortunes, palm-like, rise and spread,
And clustering honors hang about your head.

By ancient rules of chivalry, the squire 135
Perform'd what tasks his knightship might require,
Was groom or lackey, prompt at every call,
To comb the steed, brush boots or cleanse a stall;
And through this hard apprenticeship, he came
To be himself a candidate for fame; 160
Assum'd the golden spurs and then, in turn,
Taught all the hardships he was forc'd to learn:
Even thus, in politics, awhile you brave
The toils and degradations of a slave,
In the fond hope that an approaching hour 165
May place some helpless victim in *your* power,
That all your pent-up vengeance may be shed,
Like streams of molten lava, on his head.
Select a patron, an experienced knight,
To whom your vows of constancy you plight; 170
Some leader qualified to take the front
Where rogues contend, and bear the battle's brunt,
His breech made callous by repeated kicks,
His conscience petrified by pettifogging tricks;
Some small attorney, left without a case, 175
Or from the Courts ejected in disgrace;
(For strange to say, eccentric knaves there are
Who find no kind connivance at the bar;
But 'tis their knavery's *fashion*, not extent,
The conscientious brotherhood resent; 180
All forms of roguery they hate and shun,
Unless by rule and precedent 'tis done:)
Of such materials demagogues are made,

The rags and refuse of the quibbling trade,
 For 'tis a truth through nature's walks express'd,
 That worthless creatures ever climb the best; 186
 And human vermin, the confirm'd disgrace,
 The cats and rats and monkeys, of their race,
 With facile movements reach the topmost round,
 While stiff-back'd merit in the dust is found. 190

In your approaches to the scoundrel great,
 Who stand as porters at Preferment's gate,
 Prepare your spirits for the rude rebuff,
 For low-bred malice and contempt enough:
 For they who great indignities have borne, 195
 By long endurance school'd in hate and scorn,
 Are ever apt and anxious to bestow
 The wormwood potion on some wretch below.
 As naturally as tadpoles turn to frogs,
 Or fawning puppies to ferocious dogs, 200
 Your wriggling, whining sycophants, in place,
 Become the surliest monsters of their race.
 Then, like the tub-philosopher of old,
 By kicks and cudjels not to be controll'd,
 To your Antisthenes, (your patron,) spite 205
 Of bangs and footings, cleave with all your might.
 And dread thou not, (the first repulsion past,)
 He'll find thy sterling qualities at last;
 Rascals with ease their brother rascals tell,
 As dogs their comrades recognize by smell. 210

When thou such rising genius hast discern'd,
 Cling to his skirts till all his art be learn'd;
 And all capricious insolence sustain'd,
 Believe thy education cheaply gained.
 Let no fastidious delicacy mar 215
 The happier influence of the mounting star.
 Take every cuff as kindness; never lurk
 If he invoke thee to the dirtiest work.
 Study his failing: drinking if it be,
 Take care to get, or seem, as drunk as he. 220
 Or is incontinence his ruling sin,
 Then stand prepared to draw his favorites in;
 Canvass the brothels, with a taste discreet,
 And cull the daintiest tit-bits for his treat;
 And should he meet with love's posterior curse, 225

Seek you the same and strive to have it worse.
 'Tis thus congenial feelings are begun,
 The only friendship rogues can count upon.
 To soothing flattery modulate your tongue,
 And tho' no greater scoundrel lives unhung, 230
 Extol his virtues; but as white-wash falls,
 When spread too thickly, from your smoke-brown'd
 walls,
 So praise, on dusky characters when tried,
 Must, in thin coats, be cautiously applied; 235
 Or, scaling off, it leaves the surface bare,
 And blacker than before, in spite of all your care.

Many the ways, nor shall you find them hard,
 To win your master's kindest regard:
 His children kiss, though from each snubby nose
 A double stream of yellow mucous flows; 291
 Permit your lips the 'kerchief's part to play,
 And wipe the slimy excrement away.
 Or if your patron, in a lounging fit,
 A backward blast should heedlessly emit, 295
 Beware, lest any tokens of distaste
 Should all your proud expectancy lay waste;
 Put not a finger to the nose, nor seem
 To be offended at the pungent steam,
 But snuff, as if some exquisite perfume 300
 Of rose or musk were floating through the room.
 Deem all acceptable that comes from him,
 And mould your fancy to his windiest whim.
 Think it no slight, if to the kitchen sent,
 You wait the great man's leisure,—be content;
 With hearty fellowship the scullions greet, 306
 And in the chimney corner take your seat;
 Now scrape a carrot with officious zeal,
 And make the cook your melting glances feel.
 Thus Kendall rose:—by kettle-scrubbing sports,
 And interest gain'd in culinary courts. 311
 Thrice happy he, to move in such a sphere,
 And no lost caste or detriment to fear!
 His reputation too securely placed
 To be disturbed,—amended or disgraced. 315

Your patron mounting in preferment's scale,
 Keep but your nose adhesive to his tail,

And you must follow. But remember this,
 While you his culminating buttocks kiss,
 Be well prepared to kick them, should you find
 His fortunes waning: thus your post behind 271
 Is doubly bless'd. Nor does it more concern
 Your future welfare, to salute his stern,
 While its possessor prospers, than to toe
 The self-same mark, should fortune prove his foe.

And now, my pupils, steep your fancies well 276
 In all the direst fumes and fogs of hell;
 Approach with awe;—sublimer mysteries see!
 Lo, I induct you to your last degree!
 Yes, brave novitiates, let us now unfold 280
 How the capricious People are controll'd.
 Learn, first, how public favor may be gained,
 And how, (ah there's the rub!) that favor is retained.
 Say then,—is Popularity your aim?
 First be *notorious*:—that begins the game. 285
 Here different plans will serve; to steal a sheep
 May do; but merely from the tread-mill keep.
 (An awkward ladder that for “Young Ambition,”
 Where all your climbing mends not your condition.)
 But simple larceny will scarce suffice; 290
 The world expects some magnitude of vice,
 Some grand atchievement, worthy to be set
 In the first column of the chief Gazette.
 There is, in truth, gentility in crime;
 Some sins are sentimental, some sublime, 295
 Some witty and some vulgar; 'tis the last
 That for examples in our courts are cast.
 Your scrubby rogue vicariously atones
 For faults committed by distinguished ones.
 If public funds should get within thy clutch, 300
 First help thyself, nor fear to take too much:
 With money, as with arsenic, well thou know'st,
 There is no danger if we're largely dosed:
 The bane, scarce touch'd, destroys the timid rat,
 The bold one takes it freely and gets fat. 305

A Defalcation, if your plan 's well laid,
 And all your cards judiciously are play'd,
 Is the best scheme a novice can devise
 In public favor and esteem to rise. 310

First, as we said, it spreads abroad your name,
Berascall'd?—well; all statesmen are the same. 315
The journals scout you: this is still the fate
Of all who nobly venture to be great.
Let the first storm of execration pass;
Opinions change: the mob, the generous mass—
Will do you justice? No, but better still,
Will *fail* to do it, and your hopes fulfill. 320
Then fill thy purse and let the world cry “shame!”
The spoils themselves shall purify thy fame:
So cunning thieves some pilfer'd gold apply
A priestly pardon for the theft to buy.
All-potent cash! that requisite possess'd, 325
Thou hast at once, or soon may'st have, the rest.
Friends, influence, honors, (marketable stuff!)
Be sure thy plunder shall secure enough.
And can'st thou tell what station is too high
For selfish, soulless opulence to buy? 330
The Press, (grand engine!) is by cash controll'd;
“Golden opinions” may be bought for gold.

And now, a wide celebrity obtained,
The public ear, (a lengthy one,) being gained,
With no unseemly bashfulness abide, 335
But range thyself on faction's strongest side:
Then be the noisiest brawler of the gang,
Prompt at a fray or market-house harrangue.
As dogs with poisoned sausages we cheat,
And strew the savory mischief through the street,
That each confiding brute, too apt to trust 341
In man's sincerity, may bite the dust:
Thus, with envenomed doctrines scattered wide,
You win the Mob, too ready to confide,
Too apt to gulp, with appetite canine, [sign.
Each seeming good that hides the deep and dark de-

The Mob!—What shivering seizes on thy frame?
What mortal terror couches with that name?
Behold I give thee Ariadne's clue!
Explore the maze, the Minotaur subdue:
And know that beast, for cruelty renown'd, 350
In flimsiest cob-web fetters may be bound.
Are raging flames by human skill subdued?
Is Ocean travers'd in his fiercest mood?

Are tigers harness'd, lightnings caught and cool'd
 In glassy jars? and may not mobs be ruled? 356
 But rightly judge what constitutes a mob,
 Lest of their dues the "better class" you rob:
 In mere externals all distinctions lie
 Between the low-bred vulgar and the high; 360
 At the first glance, the former may offend,
 The last is most disgusting in the end:
 For when the filth remotely may be seen,
 You save your fingers from a touch unclean;
 But if a seeming purity invite, 365
 Your hands, by contact, come to evil plight.
 Have you the pauper and patrician flay'd,
 And note what nice distinctions may be made:
 Complexions vary, but, beneath the skin,
 All human flesh is wonderously akin. 370
 Refinement is, like varnishes, applied,
 The flaws of heart and character to hide;
 It shines upon the surface, to conceal
 What finish'd scoundrels meditate and feel.
 As hardest bodies take the polish best, 375
 So hardened rogues are frequently possess'd
 Of smooth exteriors, and politely cheat,
 While few suspect a courtesy so sweet.
 In spite of all the sculptor's skill and pains,
 The image still a marble heart retains: 380
 Though in each chisel'd lineament may shine
 Seraphic grace, intelligence divine,
 External is the charm, and that alone,
 And all besides is cold and senseless stone:
 Though in the world's sublimest models cast, 385
 Man is but man, and half a brute, at last;
 And though imbued with all a Stanhope's lore,
 As much a beast and blackguard as before;
 From forms restrictive happy to escape
 And sport with freedom in his natural shape; 390
 As monkeys, when the exhibition 's done,
 Are glad, unbreech'd, upon all fours to run.
 Can'st thou a band of ragged knaves collect
 More free from honest shame and self-respect,
 More prompt at insolence, abuse and brawl, 395
 Than they, the rowdy gangs of Congress Hall?
 And why? Because, in self-sufficient pride,
 They cast the cloak which hid their faults aside;

Being drunk with honors, shame's rebuke they hush,
And show their naked souls without a blush: 400
As drunkards of less note, despised and mean,
Through tattered breeches show their corporal parts
obscene.

Ye carpers, prompt at vulgar sins to catch,
Show me the mob that Congress cannot match. 405
"Cobblers and tinkers" are with wrath inflamed,
To see the councils of the land so shamed,
To see the wisdom of debate so shrunk,
In Allen raving and M'Connell drunk ! 409

Ambition's votaries, be consoled and know,
While, for your weal, ye plan the people's woe,
No human skill your purpose can defeat,
Though every grove were Education's seat,
While, spite of all the purblind patriot's pains,
The putrifactive principle remains. 415
On Delta's shore Minerva's temple stood,
A radiant structure rising from the mud;
But not the presence of the goddess there
Could disinfect the foul contiguous air:
And think'st thou Science ever can correct 420
A nation's moral taints, while vice remains uncheck'd?
Let crack'd enthusiasts hope, and knaves pretend,
All that's amiss with Spelling-Books to mend:
If legislators must like pedants look,
They'll find the birch as needful as the book. 425
Virtue by wholesome castigation comes,
Hence school-boys groan with lacerated bums;
At either end improvement we bestow,
Knowledge above, Morality below;
To signify how vain is learning's glare, 430
With no foundation of good morals there.
To domes scholastic yield all honor due,
But let the Gallows claim its tribute too;
On Pedagogues your panegyrics stretch,
But spare one sprig of laurel for Jack Ketch. 435

If men's mistakes from ignorance arise,
Knowledge alone can never make them wise;
Else would this age, so boastful of its light,
Eschew the wrong and recognize the right;
Else would the worthies of the past, unbliss'd 440

With half the science by their sons possess'd,
Not from the skies, with an indignant frown,
On us, their worthless progeny, look down.

Once, in my dreams, I saw the patriot sage,
The boast and glory of a better age; 445
That mighty mind, which honors ne'er disgraced,
Which wealth impoverish'd not nor power debas'd;
Favored by Heaven to live at such a time,
When intellect was prized and virtue was no crime:
Worthy—(Oh praise most lamentably rare!) 450
That more than throne, the Presidential Chair;—
Even while that chair its glories all retain'd,
By Washington adorn'd, and not by Polk profan'd.
In the dim hour of silence and repose,
Before my eyes the great Virginian rose; 455
In more than regal majesty he stood,—
(For what are monarchs to the wise and good?
And what are all the high-born of the earth,
Compared with souls of a celestial birth?)
Fierce rage, by manly fortitude repress'd, 460
Flash'd from his eye and struggled in his breast;
The freeman's honest rage. A glance he cast
That might a score of sceptred pygmies blast:
In such a glance the awed Convention read,
When first the hall resounded with his tread, 465
His stern resolves, before his hand unfurl'd
That scroll ordain'd to liberate a world.
To me, that trembled with ignoble dread,
The Second Glory of Columbia said:
"Go; to thy countrymen this message bear: 470
Tell them—" But hold! should I the words declare,
Oh great Defunct, the penalties might be
Curses for you and martyrdom for me.
Shall I make primers of sepulchral stones,
And beat the living with the dead man's bones; 475
Teach self-conceit its errors to detect,
And cherish'd follies thanklessly correct?
Amid this moral darkness, I discern
One ray,—it falls on the funereal urn;
It shines across the dense and hopeless gloom 480
And lights the dim inscriptions of the tomb.
But let the crumbling records of the just
Fall, like their earthly elements, to dust;

Let no reproachful monument be read,
Nor shame the living to exalt the dead.

485

I thank thee, God, for giving to this hand
No vengeful sword, no ensign of command,
No regal sceptre,—but that lash severe,
That scorpion lash, which mightiest scoundrels fear.
(None are too high, though some may be too low,
To feel the sting and deprecate the blow:) 491

Yet am I not so harsh, so void of ruth,
To give full utterance to offensive truth;
To bid this people blushingly compare
Themselves—(Oh fie!)—with what their fathers were:
No; rather let me with the stream descend 496
And to the prosperous gales my yielding canvass bend.
Let me adopt the fashions of the times,
Affect their follies and confess their crimes.
For daring to be wise beyond the age, 500
See Webster, butt of every blockhead's rage;
Praised with reluctance and with rapture blam'd,
By Democrats denounced, by Whigs disclaim'd,
Suspected, sneered at, laid upon the shelf,
Though false and faithless only to himself. 505
By his example, let us be advised
How Wisdom and Fidelity are prized.
But, Webster, take this comfort and be strong:
Better to suffer, than commit, a wrong;
Better to have our merits all denied, 510
Than strive another's excellence to hide:
Then how much better, happier, is thy lot
Than theirs who hate but comprehend thee not!
If to thy worth the world insensate be,
Its dull neglect is no disgrace to thee. 515
Mortals there are too stupid to confess
The charms of nature in her grandest dress;
Who, at Niagara, with rapture burn,
To think what mills the cataract might turn!
And can we hope that such as these could find 520
The matchless grandeur of a god-like mind?
(Expect our huckstering demagogues as soon
To note the manly virtues of Calhoun.)
When villains snarl, one certain truth is shown,—
The nature snarl'd at is unlike their own: 525
Even I, by rabid calumny misled,

Once held our Yankee Socrates in dread; [packs,
 But Faction's hounds, Van Buren's wide-mouth'd
 Prov'd his integrity by their attacks;
 And had his *wisdom* stood in need of proof, 530
 The wrath of Ingersoll had been enough.

But what of Webster? mark the man and see
 What an ambitious statesman must not be.
 Wisdom is favor'd only by the wise,
 And hence on no majority relies: 535
 Then brave aspirants—(let me not forget
 My pledge to you; an honorable debt.)—
 Rejoice, since not good qualities possess'd,
 But those you lack, will serve your purpose best,
 Distrust your gifts and note with joyful pride
 The good by heaven's beneficence denied. 541
 What pains, what labor, (more than thou can'st tell,)
 It costs the best of mortals to do well!
 Rascality no cultivation needs,
 But springs spontaneous, like pernicious weeds;
 But honesty and truth are plants most rare, 546
 Requiring culture and assiduous care.
 Then scan thy own facilities, be brave,
 And bless the chance that made thee fool or knave;
 Let moral sickness be thy rosiest health 550
 And intellectual indigence thy wealth.

As polished kettles are, by cooks discreet,
 Pronounced the least susceptible of heat,
 Less useful and available, in fact,
 Than those utensils all begrimed and black'd;
 So, in affairs of Statesmanship, we find 556
 The purest morals and the brightest mind
 Much less convenient implements will make
 Than such as seem more smutty and opaque.
 But 'tis a problem yet if rogue or fool,
 A self-will'd trickster or a willing tool, 560
 Best serves the turn: 'tis difficult to say
 Which proves the better pest, a Polk or Clay.
 Oh sad effect of national disease
 That left us no alternatives but these! 565
 Men try inoculation, to escape
 The foul distemper in an uglier shape;
 And thus our country chose the lesser curse,
 Being pox'd by Polk lest Clay should pox her worse.

But has this desperate course improved the case,
Or left us more in danger and disgrace? 571
By placing mediocrity so high,
What creeping vermin have been taught to fly!
Lo! a recorded precedent remains,
To show that men may govern without brains!
Here Cass himself encouragement espies, 576
And bold Buchanan clutches at the prize.
And see poor Allen, with a dubious glance,
'Twixt eagerness and idiocy, advance.
And twenty drivellers more on tip-toe wait, 580
To rush tumultuous for the Chair of State.
Yes, all expect to come victorious in,
Where Polk has won and Dallas hopes to win.

Let nations fear or hate us, but exempt,
I pray you gods, my country from *contempt*. 585
Oh if our land has come to such a pass
That nothing but a sharper or an ass
Can hope to rule it, as we once have err'd
And slavering imbecility preferr'd,—
Come, let a new experiment be tried, 590
And bid some shrewd, sage profligate preside:
For vicious Intellect may save a realm,
But wreck is sure with Folly at the helm.
Villains by statutes may be held in awe,
But fools are not amenable to law; 595
The first with cautious policy proceed,
The last dash onward with a reckless speed.
A roguish statesman plays a single hand,
The fool is agent for a rascal band,
Perhaps unconscious of the part he plays; 600
Betray'd himself, his country he betrays.
Knavery in sly secretiveness excels,
But Folly loves the jingling of her bells.
Scoundrels with seeming fairness cheat men's eyes,
But idiots have no art to pass for wise. 605
Hence, rogues in office, by surveillance check'd,
And fearful of a fall, may win respect;
May govern well: (but hazardous the chance,
Though truth is sometimes stranger than romance.)
But no contingency e'er brought that hour 610
Which saw the fool respectable in power.
Was ever nation in such guidance placed,

And not distress'd, endangered or disgraced?

Erratic muse! too heedless of thy way,
Must I impound thee, like a colt astray? 615
Thou can't not hope, in these illiberal days,
O'er meads of sweet morality to graze.
Come, take the dry and dusty route again,
Resume the traces and obey the rein.
Not for the public or its good I preach, 620
But treasonable arts to bold adventurers teach.

Oh Public Favor! was there ever shrine
So strong'd with zealous devotees as thine?
Who shall approach thy altars? who shall gain
That entrance thousands scramble for in vain?
Two gates to thy bright temple I behold, 626
Of ivory one and one of shining gold;
The first, call'd *Vanity*, though rich and rare,
Is insubstantial too and frail as fair;
And hence by ancient fabulists 'twas said
Through such a door delusive visions fled. 630
Here stand the Flatterers, ready to rush in,
And catch the people with a treacherous din;
As bees with brazen music are beguil'd,—
First stunn'd and stupified and then despoil'd.
The other gate, which *Avarice* we call, 635
Stands open and available to all,—
All who are furnish'd with the glittering sign,
Like that the Trojan gave to Proserpine,
And bought, as daring moderns do as well,
A right of entrance to the depths of hell; 640
For, (let it not your heaven of hope o'ercast,)
Your highest aims may come to that at last.
Not wealth alone this golden gate avails,
But oft the scum of hospitals and jails,
Lazars and paupers, by financial arts, 645
Have found this passage to the people's hearts.
For since that truth the oracle display'd:—
“A penny saved is just as good as made,”
Beggars themselves, with nought to give or lend,
May teach Economy and gain their end. 650
(For who the worth of money can display
Like those who want it sadly day by day?)
Hence many a fiscal scheme the patriot tries,

Wasting whole millions to economise ;
 Hence Congressmen protract the dear debate, 655
 Some soldier's paltry pension to vacate ;
 Or from his orphan brats and widowed wife
 To wrest the pittance that sustains their life.
 Scared at expense, the country they expose
 And leave us to the mercy of our foes; 660
 And lest our purses should be cut, their votes
 Allow the enemy to cut our throats.
 (What statesman, studious of retrenchment, yet
 Could his own dues and services forget,
 Or from his salary would a jot abate, 665
 To save the shoulders of the sinking state ?)
 The keeping of our cash, on plans so cheap,
 Costs more than all the cash we have to keep.
 What happier measure, pray, could be embrac'd
 To save our funds, than having none to waste? 670
 And since it is impossible to guess
 The true amount of credit we possess,
 Until by sure experiment 'tis tried,
 And needful loans are granted or denied,
 What thanks are due to rulers of that class 675
 Which brings us quickly to the borrowing pass!
 Placing that precious knowledge in our reach
 Which stern Necessity alone can teach.

Some schemers try the captivating quirk 674
 Of teaching ways to wealth without hard work;
 Such was the course ingenious Benton took
 To catch the gudgeons with a golden hook;
 But all in vain the patient angler sate,
 The barb was more conspicuous than the bait!
 Some on a puff'd-up currency will pitch, 680
 To make the nation prosperous and rich;
 So Chinese butchers treat a slaughtered cat,
 Inflate the carcase and pronounce it fat.

Has public weal a more pernicious bane
 Than that damn'd fault, avidity for gain? 685
 Which holds in scorn religion, virtue, sense,
 And clothes base Mammon with omnipotence.
 Where shall corruption cease when every soul
 Is eager for the mercenary dole?
 When every virtue, ay, and every vice, 690

Is quoted at a marketable price;
And reputation is esteem'd as trash,
Unless it be convertible to cash!

But is a ragged fortune thy estate?
Despair not yet, but trust the "Ivory Gate." 695
If poor in purse, be poor in spirit too,
And mark what bankrupt sycophants may do.
Of thriving statesmen, thousands have been led
Less by ambition than the want of bread.
Hunger is bold, and, in a desperate case, 700
Will make hard pushes to secure a place;
Yea, oft adventures on some shrewd emprise
Which dull repletion never could devise.
Know'st thou the region of inventive pates, 704
In prose, distinguish'd as the "Eastern States?"
Whose niggard fields but scantily supply
The coarse materials for the annual pie,
What time the land is freed from all her taints,
And prayers and pumpkins purge the costive saints.
"Tis there man's wit, by abstinence refin'd,— 710
(For want, that wastes the body, mends the mind,)
Grows keen and polish'd, like a tempered blade
On the hard surface of a grind-stone laid.
There shalt thou find that shrewd contrivance still
Which makes the pedlar's or the statesman's skill.
Hence comes that sharpness known the country o'er,
And felt too oft in demonstrations sore,
With clocks and banks that scarce may run a week,
Tariffs and tin-ware wondrous apt to leak, 720
And other bright expedients which, 'tis known,
Make housewives grumble and the public groan.
But let the East superior shrewdness claim,
The supple South, when flattery is the game,
Bids fair to win. Extravagant and rich, 725
There Panegyric takes the highest pitch;
And this the burden of the syren song:
"The sovereign people never can go wrong."
Alas! the people, in deceit unschool'd,
"Infallible," though constantly befool'd, 730
Can never err more widely than to trust
The man who calls their judgment always just.

Enough of formal strictures and advice!

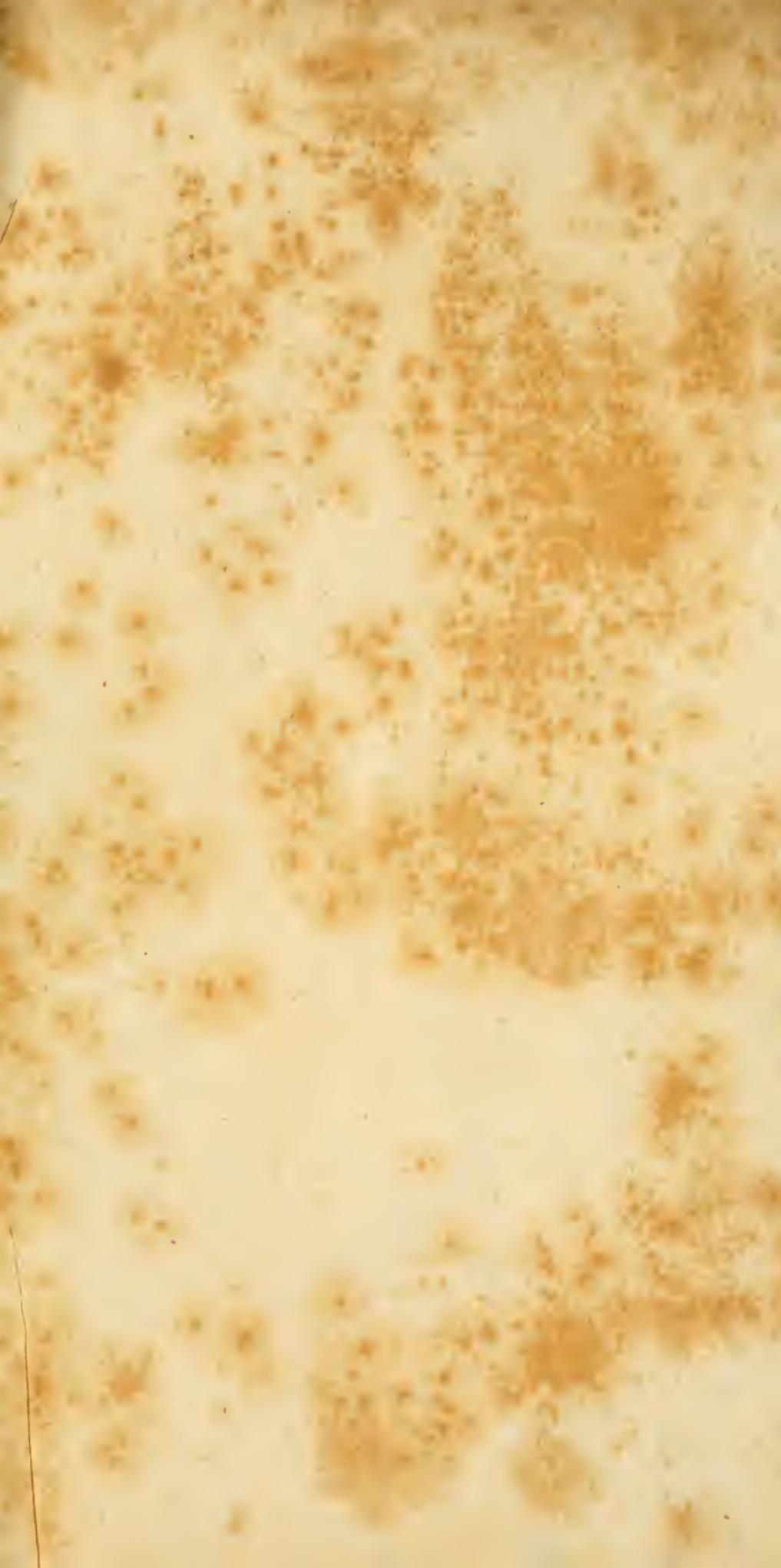
Where genius is, short lessons will suffice.
 Come then, my novice, on these hints refine, 735
 And soon your character, though black, shall shine;
 Like boots improv'd by Day & Martin's best,
 Or stoves with lamp-black and plumbago dress'd.
 Come, crush all relics of ingenuous shame,
 And shed abroad the odors of thy name: 740
 The public loves stale reputations much,
 As stinking cheese is relish'd by the Dutch.
 Now, gallant youth, thy route is well express'd;
 Proceed; let dog-fac'd rougery do the rest.
 Speed on—a chill Elysium shall be thine; 745
 Ambition's peaks with sparkling beauty shine;
 No Alpine ridge can show a brighter crest,
 To lure the wand'rer to its icy breast.
 But think what disappointments must be met,
 Think what anxieties the path beset, 750
 What perils too, a formidable host;
 But dread the moment of *fruition* most.—
 Tremble, O man, for danger then is near,
 When thy perceptions find no cause for fear! 754
 When every wish accomplished, leaves no scope
 For doubts perplexing or delusive hope;
 When time or chance, futurity or fate
 Can promise nothing to improve thy state:
 Mortal! confess to destiny thy debt,
 And see in all prosperity a threat,— 760
 A fearful menace of approaching ill,
 Which every hour is panting to fulfill.
 When lavish fortune all her gifts supplies,
 Deem not thyself a favorite of the skies,
 And all the heights of earthly glory won, 765
 Think not thy race for happiness is done.
 Say, was success to Harrison denied?
 The goal was reach'd, he touch'd the prize and died!
 The factions shout, triumphant is the din!
 Death hears the sound with a sarcastic grin; 770
 Then draws his victim from th' adoring crowd,
 And swathes his new-born glories in a shroud.
 A triumph too, O Muhlenburgh, hadst thou!
 The wreath of victory flutters on thy brow;
 But, to unfit thee for the Statesman's part, 775
 The heavens, alas! had curst thee with a heart!
 Slander could wound thee with her deadliest shaft;

The victor perish'd and the vanquish'd laugh'd !
 But happier these, to sudden doom consign'd,
 More bless'd a peaceful sepulchre to find, 780
 Than yon sad victim of a long delay,
 Kentucky's Tantalus, distressful Clay !
 For thrice ten years, still fated to be teased
 With honors seeming near, but never to be seized.
 At last, beneath the blighting gale he bends, 785
 Scorn'd by his foes and pitied by his friends !
 Was ever statesman more than Jackson bless'd ?
 Was ever man more honor'd and caress'd ?
 On him the people all their favors pour,
 And grieve, at last, that they can give no more :
 But boundless popularity and power 791
 Bring keener anguish to his sorrowing hour.
 A barren conquest his, and much it cost,—
 For all he lov'd was in the struggle lost !
 O harrowing thought, that by ambition led, 795
 He gave his heart's best treasure to the dead !
 Expos'd his faithful partner's peace and life
 To all the perils of the stormy strife.
 She fell, (let blushing history confess,) 800
 A guiltless victim to the ribald press ;
 Slain by the venom of detraction's tongue,
 And journalists by some mistake unhung.
 Glad to escape from palace and parade,
 He seeks a dreary but congenial shade ;
 A hermit now, far in the forest gloom, 805
 He weeps and prays, and by a lonely tomb
 The people's idol, the illustrious chief
 Sits like a sculptur'd effigy of grief !

And such the racers who have sped the best !
 Let clouds and curtain'd darkness hide the rest. 810
 For who so desperate, so insanely bold,
 To take the track, if all the truth were told ?
 Were it but shown what penalties and pains,
 What sure disasters and what doubtful gains
 On this Tartarean pilgrimage attend, 815
 My labors all, (like Clay's,) in smoke would end.
 Is there a wretch in nature's scale so low,
 So steep'd in infamy and drench'd with woe,
 So cross'd and lost and hopelessly undone,
 That Botts himself his fellowship would shun ; 820

Is there a beggar, convict, prisoner, slave,
 That looks with hope and rapture to the grave,
 Who, could he see what politicians bear,
 What shame, suspense, distraction and despair,
 Would not at once be reconciled to fate, 825
 And call his own hard lot a beatific state?
 Even I, from childhood to misfortune link'd,
 I, on whose birth no lucky planet blink'd,
 As poor as Job, or Noah when he plann'd
 A Hebrew crusade to the Holy Land, 830
 (Where all the cash the Circumcised possess'd
 Would be in common, as he shrewdly |guess'd;)
 Even I, though doomed like Sawyer to subsist
 On scraps—and make a trencher of my fist;
 Or less in greasy luck and more a beast 835
 Than Sawyer's self—on roots and grass to feast:
 (Old Plutarch recommends such lenten prog,
 To clear the brain-pan from Boeotian fog;
 Hence my dull wits acquired sufficient light
 To scan this sneaking, scrambling game aright:) 841
 Without a sigh of envy or regret
 I see each paltry cur above me set,
 And "sour adversity," (to me most sour,) 845
 Ne'er brought that dreary and disastrous hour
 When, all the pomp and luxury in view
 That Kinderhook's equestrian beggar knew,—
 Who fed on pewter once, but grown too great,
 Must needs be feasted from a golden plate!
 Not I by such enticements could be moved
 To change this starving liberty so loved 850
 For all the thriving falsehood and deceit,
 The cunning and ability to cheat,
 The splendor and—(less prized than all the rest,) 855
 The PUBLIC FAVOR, Kinderhook possess'd.

THE END.



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